WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 NOVEMBER 1995

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

KAREN'S COLUMN

OLD-FASHIONED ROSES, LILACS REPLANTED AROUND WCHS MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

This month we again feature a picture of Ella Grenier, doing good works in the garden at the Museum on Main Street. Ella is shown getting ready to plant a lilac bush in the Museum's front yard.

This lilac had originally been in the garden at 1015 Wall Street, where our museum house was located before it was moved. Ella has also planted an "original" climbing rose in a sunny spot along the house's southern foundation.

The rose and lilac lived in Susan Wineberg's garden until we were able to replant them at the Museum.

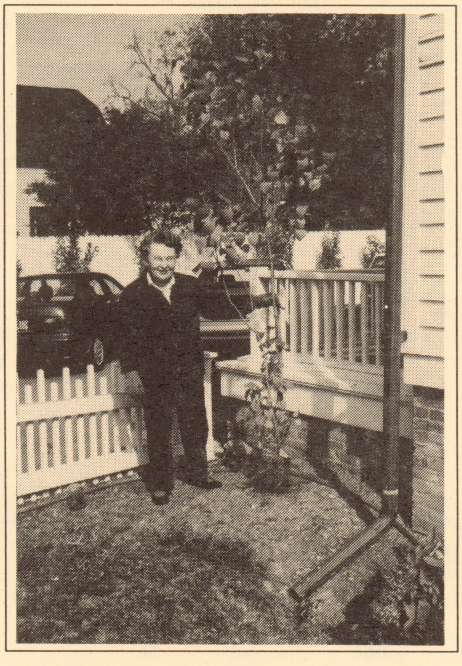
Esther Warzynski rescued a poppy from Wall Street and cared for it for several years. Now it is growing in the Main Street garden.

We are hoping that these plants will flourish now that they are again planted in proximity to the house they were associated with for so long.

Elizabeth Dusseau has planted three starts of her Seven Sister roses (a fragrant old-fashioned rose) inside the fence near the basement stairwell. They will make a beautiful addition to our garden in a few years.

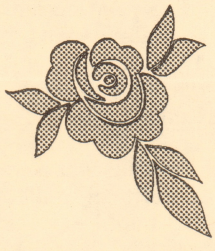
The next big thing that will happen at the house is the installation of the interior sprinkler system for fire protection. Jeff Pigeon from Ann Arbor Fire Protection has assured me that they will be starting work very soon.

Two tasks that are now complete: Bumper blocks in the parking lot and the underground telephone service.



We are getting to the point where we can use some volunteer labor for cleaning, painting, disposing of trash and other miscellaneous jobs. Please call if you can contribute a few hours.

Karen O'Neal, 665-2242



PORTABLE MUSEUM SHOP NEEDS VOLUNTEER CLERKS

WCHS's portable museum shop will set up for holiday business at Kerrytown with its stock of unique gifts, notepaper and such two days this month. Volunteer clerks are needed for two hour shifts.

The 'shop' will be open Sunday, November 19, from noon to 5 p.m. and Friday, November 26 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. It may also be open a day or two in December. If you can help for a couple of hours or more please call Bets Hansen, shop chairman, 663-5467.

SENIOR GROUP ENJOYS 'WHAT IS IT' GAME

About 50 seniors from Manchester and Chelsea enjoyed WCHS's *"What is it?"* game last month at Manchester, Arlene Schmid, chair of the traveling exhibit, reports.

WCHS offers the exhibits of small artifacts set up as a humorous game, one to schools for children and another for adults . They are available for classes and meetings. Information: Mrs. Schmid, 665-8773.

NOVEMBER SPEAKER WILL TALK ABOUT LITTLE KNOWN PART OF LOCAL HISTORY

A stepping stone at a local fraternity which, when accidentally turned over, revealed it was a cemetery memorial with a Hebrew inscription, opened up a hitherto unknown chapter in local history.

Helen Aminoff conducted extensive research as a result of the accidental find and discovered the first Jewish settlers came in the 1840s. Previously it was thought the first Jewish family did not arrive in Ann Arbor until the 1890s.

Ms. Aminoff will tell about her research discoveries at the WCHS meeting at 2 p.m. Sunday, November 19, at Bentley Historical Library on North Campus.

Her talk will complement that given in September 1994 by Fay Woronoff who spoke primarily about local Jewish history of the 20th century.

Admission is free. Refreshments will be served.

KNAPP'S POINTS GROWING, PLEASE KEEP COLLECTING

WCHS now has 6,556 Bill Knapp's Restaurant points toward more acid free materials to safely store textiles. That is 1,068 more since last report. Thanks to all who contributed and please keep saving points for us.

Anyone who eats at Knapp's may request a yellow points slip from the cashier each time, with one point given for each dollar spent.

Please give or send to: Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

HISTORIC BRIDGES FEBRUARY 18 TOPIC

Charles K. Hyde, Wayne State University professor, will talk about *"Historic Highway Bridges of Michigan"* at the February 18 WCHS meeting. Location to be announced.

Professor Hyde is the author of a 1993 book of the same name as his talk.

No WCHS meetings are planned in December and January.

HAVE GENEALOGY BUG?--HERE'S HOW TO TREAT IT

Probably the best way to get started in genealogy is with oral history--start with grandparents, aunts and uncles, Karen Jania, resident genealogist at Bentley Historical Library, told the October WCHS audience.

"It's something you can never start too soon because people don't live forever."

Ms. Jania has been at Bentley about eight years but genealogy has been a hobby of hers for over 20 years, she said.

"I'm excited about genealogy and I like to share my knowledge with others so they too can get the genealogy bug."

She handed out a 12-page packet of information like she uses for her workshops. "While normally I talk about doing genealogy at Bentley, the handout information can apply to other libraries and archives."

The first page was a pedigree chart. "Start with your name on the left, father's name above and mother's below. That way you have a standard--paternal family on the upper half, maternal family on the lower half."

"I'm surprised how many people don't know who their grandparents were, or if they do know, they don't know where they were from."

"If you can, sit down with grandparents, aunts and uncles and get some basic information. Oral history is generally reliable."

"Sometimes relatives don't want to give information for whatever reason. In that case you have to respect these people. If they don't want to talk about it, don't pursue it. There are other ways.

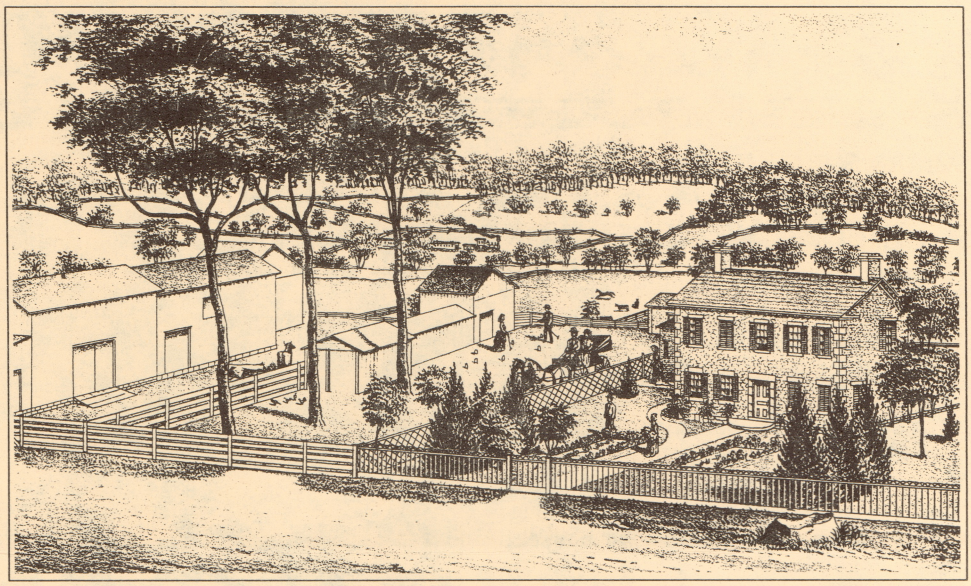
"Sometimes they have skeletons in the closet or, for whatever reason, they are not comfortable talking about it. Be considerate of the other person. The nicer you can be, the more interested, the more respectful, the more information you will get.

"My grandmother kept an old Bible by her bedside. She wrote down all her kids, the day they were born, the time and how much they weighed. Previously, I had known the day born but I had no idea of their weight. They were all eight and nine pounders so when I had my eight and ten pound children, I knew it was genetic.

"After my grandmother died and we went through the house we found an unexpected treasure. It was not a marriage certificate but a marriage record filled in with her name and grandpa's, where they were from, when they got married and the minister's name.

"Once you've exhausted oral history or not got any, you have to start somewhere.

"If you haven't found out where your ancestor resided from oral history, one real good place is the census index. At Bentley we just have Michigan. You can look up the surname. The index will tell what county and township the person resided in and what page of the census their name is on.



Some lucky family history researchers might find a picture similar to this of an ancestor's home in an old county atlas. This is the Nathan T. White home in Ann Arbor Township from the 1874 Washtenaw County Atlas. Incidentally, the house is still standing across from Huron High School.

Federal censuses of Michigan are available for every decade from 1820 to 1880 according to her information sheet. However the 1900, 1910 and 1920 are also available. Michigan territorial and state censuses are available from 1827, 1834, 1845, 1884 and 1894.

"Typically, they tell you the head of the household, age, sex, color, whether husband or father, if widowed, where mother and father born, number of years resided in state, also number of years in the United States.

"Then you have censuses like 1840. All it tells you is the head of household and age range and sex of household members, as one male 0-1 year, one female,1-5 years, and so on in five-year increments.

"The 1894 state census is a superb resource. There also is an 1884 state census. However, in Washtenaw County they did not count Ann Arbor, Dexter or Ypsilanti.

"Taking the census was a way of getting income. You got a lot of illiterate people doing it. They might ask the name and spell it phonetically. If someone was not home, especially on a second call, they might ask a neighbor for information.

"The census is not 100 percent fact but it is a good place to start. You're not going to get perfect spelling. Typically with the place of birth and parents I've found very little error

"There is a Soundex index on microfilm in libraries which have census records which may be used to get all the names that could be confused with that name as far as spelling goes. You cross out all vowels, also 'w' and 'y'. The remaining consonants are given a number. With that number you can access the Soundex index to locate the correct family. Then with this new information you can go directly to the census

Someone said the secretary of State uses the Soundex system and the first three numbers of your driver's license is the Soundex code for your surname.

"You can also use the Latter Day Saints Library. One of the many excellent resources they have is called an IGI listing. All you have to know is the state the family resided in, then you can look up the surname."

In the example she used, Jefferson Hafley, it told that his father and mother were Jacob and Polly and he was born in 1841 in Casey County, Kentucky.

"I did that with some of my surnames in Kentucky. I went through and found all the same last names, then went through to highlight all of that same last name in Casey County. Then I went through to find all whose parents were Jacob and Polly to highlight them.

"That gave me all their children. Of those others in the same county, there is a good chance they are related to Jacob and Polly's family, perhaps cousins.

"With that information are reel numbers of microfilm that you can request to see. The nearest LDS Branch Library is at 914 Hill Street in Ann Arbor.

"Another way to try to find out where a relative resided is the *Michigan Biography Index.* We have it at Bentley. It is also at the Library of Michigan in Lansing and the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library.

"A woman at Burton, Frances Loomis, in 1950 went through Michigan printed sources and indexed any biography of five lines or more. The index tells where it appears, such as in a county history.

"People paid to be in county histories. Sometimes families who didn't have a lot of money pooled their money so the biography contained not only information about the man and his family but also his wife and her parents and their children.

"So it is well worth looking at biographies, even if they are not about your individual.

"Another place to find out where your ancestor resided is in city or city/county directories. For example, an 'Ann Arbor City Directory lists Herbert Mallory, an instructor at the U-M, wife, Ellamae, and they lived at 1910 Cambridge.

"County directories list residents in other towns in the county and, in back, have a rural section with names in alphabetical order. They tell what township and section, how many acres and how much the farmer's land was worth.

"With the township and section, then you can go to the plat books for the location.

"Bentley has many city directories for a lot of Michigan towns. We have Detroit directories from about 1860 pretty much through 1950, then it's spotty.

"Give us a call and ask if we have a specific city for a certain time period. We have a handy book we can use to look it up quickly. I should add though that we only have city directories through 1940 in this building.

"Beyond 1940 we have them in what is called our annex, an off-site location. It takes 48 hours to bring them over here. If you want to see stored directories, call and make an appointment.

"To find out where a relative was born you can go to the census.

"Another resource are printed histories--county histories, also a lot of town histories. Genealogy societies have done wonderful printed histories. The newer printed histories in particular are just fantastic.

"Genealogy societies have all kinds of information they want to share. They do nice write-ups. Hillsdale County did a wonderful one.

"Even if your relatives were just farmers, look in there--every one was a farmer. Check it out. Sometimes you'll be pleasantly surprised.

"Another way of finding when your relative was born is under a heading the Library of Congress calls 'Register of Births, Etc..--that's a catchall phrase for birth records, death records, marriage records, church records--vital type records.

"Here at Bentley we do not have vital records. You cannot come here for birth certificates or baptismal records. We tend to have compilations.

"Margaret Lambert, who was very active in the area, did some wonderful compilations of marriage and death notices from many different newspapers from different counties, Washtenaw in particular.

"For weddings it may tell who the witnesses were. If the minister is named, sometimes you can find out what church he was related to. Then you can go to that church and they might have records.

"We actually have the record books at Bentley for Zion Lutheran and Salem Lutheran churches and others from the Ann Arbor area.

"The county genealogy society has a library at the Latter Day Saints (LDS) Branch Library. They have a lot of compilations there. Also, the Ann Arbor Public Library has some of the more basic printed resources.

"The Library of Michigan in Lansing is excellent for genealogists. You only have to drive an hour to get to it up US-23 to I-96 to I-496 and exit at the Martin Luther King exit (previously called Logan Street). The library is on Allegan Street. The state museum, archives and library are all together. It's a beautiful complex.

LADIES, IT'S NOT NICE TO FOOL UNCLE SAM

Censuses are an important resource for genealogists to learn about their relatives but censuses are not 100 percent fact., Karen Jania said.

If you check a census and then if you were to go back ten years to an earlier census, ages may not jibe up. It was common for women to only age six years between censuses. Men's ages tend to be more accurate.

"Official birth records are real tricky. They are under the privacy act and hard to get ahold of. However, if they were put in the public domain prior to the privacy act they will often times still be available.

"The LDS library has marriage, birth and death records on microfilm, copied from the county courthouse. Often times with birth records you get the parents names, occupation and sometimes a little more.

"I went to different repositories here in Washtenaw County to see what they had. Manchester Township Library has some birth records and other types of records. Other local repositories are Dexter Area Museum, McKune Memorial Library, Chelsea, and Ypsilanti Historical Archives at the museum.

"To find out where a relative died or was buried, we have some registers and cemetery records at Bentley. Some cemeteries have been read. If a name is very ethnic, it may not have been copied down. That doesn't mean the relative is not there. Most cemeteries have ledger books."

Ms. Jania listed some local cemeteries where you can look at the records. They include Arborcrest Memorial Park (established 1928), Bethlehem United Church of Christ, Forest Hill Cemetery and St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Ann Arbor and Highland and St. John Catholic Church in Ypsilanti. Bentley has some of the Bethlehem records.

"The Tuesday Evening Genealogy Group came in here several years ago and transcribed the Forest Hill interment records and published this lovely book. It tells when they died, birthplace, age at death, residence at death and plot number.

"Funeral Homes are a good resource. Muehlig's have records dating from around the 1860s. We have Dolph Funeral Home records at Bentley from 1930-50. They are excellent but, unfortunately, most are not from the state of Michigan. I think many of them came to the U-M." She recommended calling ahead to local repositories, cemeteries and funeral homes.

"I was tickled to death one day. I was doing genealogy for somebody, trying to find where they were living in 1915, and found that most of the 1915 city directory actually listed deaths.

"Another way to find out where your relatives were are county plat books. They are broken up by townships. Townships are broken into sections and they are numbered. It will show you the plot of land, how many acres it was, who the owner was and a little black dot indicates some kind of structure. The maps often show schools too.

"Sometimes there are pictures of farms and lithographs of prominent individuals in the plat books.

"We have Michigan state land tract books. You have to know the township and range which you can find in plat books and a description, something like west half of the northeast quarter." From the tract book you can find when they purchased it for how much.

"Many of the censuses contained a separate agricultural census. The 1894 census lists how many acres in the farm, how many developed, undeveloped, how many devoted to cherry trees, how many cows, how much money from butter, milk, laying hens--nitty gritty about the farm.

"It's nice to know when a relative was born and died but it's also nice to know what their lives were like.

"I also wanted to go through some out-of-the-way type resources. We have old tax records for Washtenaw County here. The more current ones are at the county clerk's office.

"Another resource that is kind of fun are school records. Here at Bentley we have some old Washtenaw school records., For the U-M there are registers listing students for every semester from1860-1904..

"The register tells how old they were, their class status, who their parents were, home address, school address, how much tuition they paid.

"I've been processing University registrar's records. In the 1880s they would conduct high school visits in the state of Michigan to see how good they were. If you graduated from an accredited school you could enter the University without taking an exam.

"The school visit reports list the principal, all teachers, courses they taught, how

effective a teacher they were, how many books in their library, town population, school population and population of that particular school.

"Newspapers are also a good resource. You can find obituaries but they are harder to find prior to 1900. Often times the elderly and infant deaths were not published. The more unusual or prominent deaths were in the newspaper.

"Throughout the United States, in every county, there are always historical agencies you can write to. When writing make your question very specific, give relevant names, dates, places and keep your letter brief and to the point. Always include a self-addressed stamped envelope and it's a nice gesture to include a couple of dollars for their effort.

"I have a very helpful book, *Michigan Genealogy: Sources and Resources* by Carol McGinnis. She tells you what kind of things you can find where and most of the places you can write. I think its a pretty standard book in most libraries.

"Bentley has Michigan information only, with the main focus on Washtenaw County. They have the census for Washtenaw County only.

The library on the U-M North Campus is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday. You may call them at (313) 764-3482 or you may send a written request if you can't get to the library, Ms. Jania said. Send it to Bentley Library, 1150 Beal Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48109

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

It's often a squeeze to get everything we'd like in the *Impressions*. We realized recently that a report of two anniversary certificates awarded in 1994 did not make it.

For the record, a framed certificate was presented to the Ann Arbor Department of Parks and Recreation on the 150th anniversary of Cobblestone Farm house.

A framed certificate was also presented to the Schwaben Verein marking the 100th anniversary of the acquisition of their property at 215-217 South Ashley Street. Patricia Austin, now immediate past-president, presented both. Art French, president of the Schwabens who is also on the WCHS board, accepted for that group.

HOW TO JOIN

Send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS Membership, c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336.

Annual dues are individual , $15; couple/family, $25; student or senior,(60+), $10; senior couple (one 60+), $19; business/association, $50; patron, $100. Information: 662-9092.

ARTIFACTS TO DONATE?

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS should contact Judy Chrisman, collections chair, at 769-7859 or by mail, 1809 Dexter Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

HISTORY HAPPENINGS AROUND THE COUNTY

Chelsea Area Historical Society: 7:30 p.m. second Monday at Depot, North Main at railroad track.

Dexter Society: Annual bazaar at museum, 3443 Inverness, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, December 2, featuring Santa and a photographer to take children's pictures with him. All handmade bazaar items.

Annual family Christmas Sing 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 8, at museum with Santa and Butterfly, the clown making balloons into animals. Open to the public.

Manchester Society: Dedication of John B. Swainson Room at Blacksmith Shop museum, 324 East Main, at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 21.

Milan Society: Program series on local businesses and local talent. 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street.

Salem Society: Elmer and Annie Wessell, longtime Salem Township residents, will tell about their visits to each county courthouse in Michigan at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, November 16 at the Township Hall.

Saline Society: Public meeting Wednesday, November 15, with Michigan history students in room 11 at the high school at 7:30 p.m.

Friday and Saturday, January 19-20, 9th annual antiques show at Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds.

Ypsilanti Society: The museum will be all dressed up Victorian style for the Christmas open house 2-5 p.m. Sunday, December 10. Refreshments. Extended hours to be announced. Information: 482-4990.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Address: 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Mailing: Caroline Mohai, 663-6106
WCHS Office: (313) 662-9092
Published September-May, except December, January.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'JEWISH HISTORY OF EARLY ANN ARBOR'

2:00 P.M. · SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19, 1995

BENTLEY LIBRARY
1150 BEAL
(U-M NORTH CAMPUS)
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, MI